Opening Remarks
December 2, 2012

John Buchanan
Kenilworth Union Church

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An ordination on the first Sunday of Advent is a very appropriate and happy convergence, and I am honored to be part of it.

Ordinations, after all, are about the bold idea that God comes into this life of ours, sometimes dramatically, but more often, I think quietly but insistently, with a redeeming, reconciling, life-giving love, and with a call to respond, to serve, to give life away for something one deeply believes and trusts and hopes for.

It is about new beginnings, a new birth of sorts in the life of the one ordained and in the life of the particular congregation. Those are distinctly Advent notions.

It was my very great privilege to be Jo Pruenninger's pastor, or at least one of her pastors: to watch as her faith deepened to include the possibility that God had something for her to do: to follow her through the rigors of Divinity School at the University of Chicago, one the finest and most demanding theological faculties in the world, and to watch, in awe and gratitude as she experienced an evolving, sharpening sense of call. And then, to be her colleague on the staff of Fourth Presbyterian Church where she served in an interim capacity with grace and competence and faithfulness.

And so it was a very happy convergence when I received the e mail telling me that the congregation of the Kenilworth Union Church had voted to invite Jo to join the staff as an Associate Pastor, and that she was to be ordained and installed at a Sunday morning Service at which I had been invited to be the preacher.

Now, you may know that ordinarily the person to be ordained gets to choose and invite who she wants to be the preacher for the occasion. So, you can see that poor Jo was in an awkward situation in that I had already been invited to preach. She could have uninvited me of course, or she could graciously accept the inevitable reality. Happily for me, at least, that is what Jo chose to do.

There will be more said later in this service about the congregation that has called her to ministry, and about Jo and her profession. Let me say, simply, that this is an extraordinary church, blessed in many ways with a strong tradition of faithful worship and outreach, blessed with both resources and responsibility, and that Jo Pruenninger is an extraordinary woman with all the gifts and skills she needs to become, in partnership with her new congregation, an extraordinary minister of Word and Sacrament.

I am grateful for this day and for the privilege of being here, and I pray God's blessing on you, congregation and minister, in all the days ahead.